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THE SCHOOLBOY'S DREAM

BY OLIVE SUTHERLAND
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(A boy is seated at study with a copy of Caesar before him.)

BOY (*sleepily*): "Cum esset Caesar—Caesar—in citeriore Gallia, ita—ita—uti supra demonstravimus crebri ad eum ru-rumores affere—afferebantur—" (*head falls on book*).

(Enter ghost of Caesar. Boy stirs in sleep—stretches—becomes aware of the apparition.)

BOY: Great Caesar's ghost, what's that?

CAESAR: Vocasne me?

BOY (*aside*): That sounds like Latin. Wonder who he is. (*Aloud*) Talk English—this isn't school. Why don't you say something? (*Becoming frightened*) Great Caesar! Who are you anyway?

CAESAR: Dixisti. Sum Caesar quem omnis orbis terrarum maximum Romanum appellavit.

BOY: "Sum Caesar"—wait a minute. Oh! that's easy—"I am Caesar." But say, you don't mean it, do you? You're not really Caesar, the Caesar who wrote this book? Where have you been all this time?

CAESAR: In inferiore terra in hibernis.

BOY (*making a dash for his book*): "In citeriore Gallia in hibernis"—Say, Mr. Caesar, you have two words wrong, and you ought to know, since you wrote it.

CAESAR (*paying no attention to the boy's remark*): Cum in inferiore terra essem crebri ad me rumores afferebantur litterisque item magistrorum certior fiebam omnes pueros puellasque contra meos commentarios coniurare equosque inter se dare.

BOY: Oh, now I've caught on! You didn't fool me this time. If you'd talk book language all the time I'd know what you are driving at, provided you didn't use the words in chapter two, for I haven't looked up those words yet; so of course I don't know

them. But I know what you said this time all right. You said (*speaking slowly and from time to time referring to the book*), "While I was in the lower world frequent rumors were brought to me, and I was also informed by the letters of the teachers, that all the boys and girls were conspiring against my commentaries and were exchanging horses"—horses—horses—ha, ha!—we don't call them horses; we call them "ponies." But I haven't got one, honestly I haven't (*rises from his chair in his excitement*).

CAESAR: Sit—(*Boy falls back into his chair with a thud*).

CAESAR:—mihi negotium ut de his rebus cognoscam.

BOY (*aside*): I thought that was an English word—it came so sudden and emphatic like.

CAESAR: Sis—

BOY (*weakly*): Yes, sir.

CAESAR: —tu auxilio mihi.

BOY (*wildly*): This is the most confusing conversation. My head fairly swims. One minute I hear a real sensible English word, then the next minute some of that tiresome old Latin is tacked on to it so that it might be heathen Chinese for all I know about it.

CAESAR: I take mercy upon you. If you cannot speak my language I shall oblige you by speaking yours. Now, my lad, come tell me—what do you think of my conquests in Gaul, my diplomacy, my generalship, my—

BOY: I don't know anything about those things. I don't have time to look them up. But I'll tell you one thing—I hate this old book of yours. It wouldn't be so bad if it had any sense to it, but what's the use of all those ablatives, datives, subjunctives, purpose clauses, indirect questions, infinitives with accusatives for subjects, all jumbled up together in such a crazy patchwork quilt that it gets upon a fellow's nerves? Say, where could a fellow find out about those conquests of yours? I think I would like to know about them.

CAESAR: In the manner of Cicero, my fellow-country-man, I could exclaim "O tempora! O mores! Haec magistri intellegunt. Discipuli haec vident. Error tamen vivit," and add with feeling, "O miseri commentarii, O miserior Caesar, O miserrimus puer." You read and yet you do not read, for you read without compre-

hending. You make of my work which I had thought would speak to men of plans carefully formed, of leadership unrivaled, of boundless ambition and growing achievement, of fears and hopes and living deeds, a complicated puzzle of words and phrases which at the best but pleases you to solve, yet lacking soul, cold and dead.

BOY: All that may be very true, but a fellow can't do everything. I hate Latin anyway. It's too hard—takes too long to learn. I'm going to drop it next semester. Father said I might.

CAESAR: All failure is divided into three parts, one of which the "Gay-Guy" possesses, the second the "I'll-quit-anians," the third those who in their own language are called "Cant's," but in ours "Dulls." Of all these the Dulls are the bravest because they are the farthest away from the hope and inspiration of success. To which tribe, young man, do you belong? Or do you not scorn to be counted among these barbarians and prefer to claim citizenship in the great city of Victory, whose brave warriors have subdued all the world by living up to the martial watchword, "Veni, vidi, vici"? Answer me.

BOY: For a long time, O Caesar, I have been living in the land of Failure, but I guess I'm tired of it now. I don't like the ways and customs of the folks that live there; so I'm going back to my native city just as soon as I can, and I hope I may some time say as you have said, "I came, I saw, I conquered." But I'm too sleepy now, Mr. Caesar. I'll have to wait till tomorrow morning (*head drops on desk*).

CAESAR: Bene dixisti, puer fortissime. Vale, mi amice, vale. (*Exit Caesar.*)

BOY: What a funny dream, I do declare! But I guess after all I did get a glimmer of the truth. Anyway, I don't think I'll drop Latin yet. (*Looks at his watch.*) Eleven o'clock! Well, no wonder I'm tired—the Land of Nod for me!

[*Written for the Roman Senate, Eastern High School.*]